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HOME GARDENING

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U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE



HOME GARDENING

"No similar area of land on the farm or around the home will give as great food value as will the garden"

THE needs for food in 1919 are changed from those of last year, but they are just as great. Fewer American soldiers are overseas to be supplied with food, but there are more hungry civilians of other nations, and upon the United States still rests a large part of the obligation of feeding them. In addition to its

economic value in increasing production and reducing food bills, Why Garden in 1919? there are many other arguments for continuing the home garden movement. City people have learned for the first time how good

really fresh vegetables can be when they come right from their own backyard gardens, and they are unwilling to go back to the flavorless, wilted products that have been hauled long distances and handled many times before reaching the kitchen. They have learned, too, that the physical exercise in the open air which the care of the garden requires brings more restful sleep and a greatly improved digestion, resulting in better health and greater vigor. In fact, one of the strongest arguments in favor of the city home garden movement is that it provides the right kind of exercise and recreation for business people whose lives are spent largely indoors. Moreover, the home vegetable garden is something that

the whole family can be interested in and help to care for. The Benefit and Pleasure schools are teaching the principles of gardening, and the boys and girls by this method are getting acquainted with nature and learning the value of efforts put forth intelligently and systematically.

Likewise many of the "grown-ups," through their work in gardening, have begun to experience the pleasure of contact with mother earth and growing things. There is something about the culture of the soil, something touching upon the creative impulse, that never has been experienced by the city man or woman, boy or girl, who has not had a chance to tinker with a piece of workable ground. The cultivation of a garden also involves seeking an answer to a thousand questions in natural history, and demands an elemental knowledge of the workings of nature. And, last but by no means least, the civic value of these gardens must be considered, for they make beautiful many unsightly, barren spots in our towns and cities, thereby fostering the growth of civic pride and a love for the beautiful.

It is no wonder, then, that the thousands of people, men, women, and children, who made gardens last year from motives of patriotism, when food was our dominant resource in winning the war, want to continue to make them for

Permanence the benefit and pleasure that will be their reward. The value of this movement can not be overestimated, and every effort should be made to extend it. The goal will not be reached until there is a productive home garden on every farm, a backyard garden for every village, town, and city home, every vacant lot in a community under cultivation, and every table supplied with vegetables the year round from the gardens of the community. The United States Department of Agriculture is ready to give tested advice to both experienced and amateur gardeners. Even the most inexperienced man, woman, boy, or girl may learn to plan, plant, and cultivate a garden from the Department of Agriculture's free garden bulletins.

DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF THE COUNTRY

As the conditions which confront the gardener differ widely in the various sections of the country, the department has issued one bulletin which applies to the Northern and Western States and one which is adapted for use in the Southern

North and West States. The first of these, which is entitled "The Farm Garden in the North" (Farmers' Bulletin 937), gives a plan for the half-acre garden, and also for the smaller town or city plot. Directions are given for the preparation of the soil, the use of manures and fer-

tilizers, the amount of seed to plant for a family of four, the arrangement of hotbeds, and many other items. One especially useful feature is the gardeners' planting

Planting Table table, which gives in tabular form the amount of seed or number of plants for a 100-foot row of each of the well-known vegetables, the proper depth for planting, and the distance apart the plants should be. Another table gives the latest safe dates for planting

vegetable seeds in the different zones of the Northern and Western States, which can be easily determined by reference to the zone map on another page of the bulletin.

South The last 25 pages of the bulletin give specific cultural directions for each of the most used vegetables. The same sort of information adapted for use in the Southern States is supplied in Farmers' Bulletin 934, entitled "Home Gardening in the South." This bulletin will repay careful study, for in the warmer States where vegetables can be grown in nearly every month of the year a well kept garden of half an acre will produce as much in money value as two or three acres in general farm crops.

CITIES AND TOWNS

Gardening under the conditions which exist in cities and towns is essentially different from gardening in the country, and needs special study on the part of the gardener. A bulletin designed to meet this need has been prepared by the Department of Agriculture. It is Farmers' Bulletin 1044, and is called "The City Home Garden." It contains the same sort of information as is given in the two other bulletins which have been described, but it is adapted to the backyard and vacant lot type of garden.

INSECTS AND DISEASES

The gardener who starts with a clean soil may do much to keep insects and diseases out, and thus save the trouble and cost of applying sprays. Prevention is better than cure, especially in the home garden, which usually must be planted in the same ground year after year. Information as to the prevention

Spraying as well as the eradication of insect enemies and plant diseases may be found in Farmers' Bulletin 856, called "The Control of Diseases and Insect Enemies of the Home Vegetable Garden." It is well illustrated, so that the ordinary garden pests may be easily identified, and contains formulas for sprays and insecticides and directions for their use when either insects or diseases have appeared.

VEGETABLES IN THE DIET

At least one-fifth of the diet should consist of vegetables, especially those that are fresh. Two helpful bulletins on the preparation and use of vegetables are Farmers' Bulletin 256, entitled "Preparation of Vegetables for the Table," and Farmers' Bulletin 871, "Fresh Fruits and Vegetables as Conservers of Other Staple Foods."

THE GARDEN'S SURPLUS

A half-acre garden, if cared for properly, will produce far more vegetables than the average family can consume during the summer season, and the important problem arises of preserving them for use at other seasons when they are very expensive and difficult to obtain. Canning has become the most widely used and popular means of preserving vegetables. Complete directions as to the best methods may be found in "Home Canning of Fruits and Vegetables" (Farmers' Bulletin 853), and "Home Canning by the One-Period Cold-Pack Method" (Farmers' Bulletin 839).

Drying also offers a simple, convenient, and economical method for preserving food materials, and permits the carrying over of the surplus to the time when there is a scarcity of vegetables. Success in this method of preservation depends upon the observance of a few fundamental principles. Full directions may be found in "Farm and Home Drying of Fruits and Vegetables" (Farmers' Bulletin 984). Certain vegetables, such as carrots, turnips, Irish potatoes, and cabbage, may be stored to good advantage. If permanent facilities are not available these crops can be kept in outdoor pits or banks, requiring no cash outlay except labor. Directions for the making of such pits as well as the building of more permanent storage houses are given in Farmers' Bulletin 879, "Home Storage of Vegetables."

HOW TO GET INFORMATION

All the Farmers' Bulletins mentioned in this text are available for free distribution. A postal card addressed to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., will bring them. Many excellent publications on gardening are also issued by the States for distribution to their own citizens. An inquiry addressed to your State agricultural college will bring you information as to what has been issued by your own State, and your county agent can supplement this advice by suggestions as to the adaptations of directions to your local conditions.

There are many books on gardening which provide delightful and profitable reading. A few of the best of these should be read if possible as a supplement to the authoritative information contained in the Government and State publications.

Ask at your Public Library for some of the following, suggested by the American Library Association's Food Information Committee:

Public Library L. H. Bailey's "Principles of Vegetable Gardening" (Macmillan); "Manual of Gardening" (Macmillan), by the same author; "Gardening for Pleasure" and "Gardening for Profit," by Peter Henderson (Orange Judd); "Garden Farming," by L. C. Corbett (Ginn & Co.); Lloyd's "Productive Vegetable Gardening" (Lippincott); and Watts' "Vegetable Gardening" (Orange Judd). Lack of space makes it impossible to mention all the many good books on gardening, including those on special phases of the subject.

"A small garden well cared for is far better than a larger garden neglected"